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Senate Republicans Announce Drive To Save Merit Scholarships

***Sikkema: “The Merit Scholarship currently is
funded and we intend to keep it that way”***

Forums, Web site help families express their
support for the popular \$2,500 scholarships

LANSING – Students and families will have an opportunity to let lawmakers know they support keeping current funding for the Michigan Merit Award Scholarship through a series of community roundtable meetings and a new Web site that, Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema said today.

“The Merit Award Scholarship provides many students and working families with the essential financial aid they need to afford a college education or vocational training after high school,” Sikkema said. “Students and parents need to know they can count on Republicans to keep the promise we made to them when we created this scholarship.

“The Merit Award Scholarship currently is funded and we intend to keep it that way.”

Sikkema, R-Wyoming, said that protecting funding for the Merit Award is the top priority for Senate Republicans, adding that the scholarship has been one of the best investments the state of Michigan has ever made in its future.

On the Web...

Visit www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/merit to find out more information about Michigan Merit Award Scholarship. There you will see how the Merit is helping hundreds of thousands of Michigan families and students make a college education more affordable. You will also be able to send an e-mail message directly to your state senator to let him or her know you support the Merit Award Scholarship.

(MORE)

“The \$2,500 Merit Award Scholarship will cover nearly two-years’ tuition at most of Michigan’s community colleges,” he said. “In these tough economic times, this scholarship can mean the difference between a student going to college or putting his or her educational plans on hold.”

Sikkema said Republicans in the Senate and House of Representatives will oppose Governor Granholm’s proposal to reduce the scholarships to \$500 per student from \$2,500. He said the governor’s proposal diverts funding for the Merit Award – which comes from a portion of Michigan’s federal tobacco lawsuit settlement – and uses the money to increase other government programs.

“At a time when we are cutting budgets, we cannot afford to increase government at the expense of our college-bound high school students and their hard-working parents,” Sikkema said. “We already have a dedicated funding source for the Merit Awards and we are not going to siphon it off for other, lesser-priority programs.”

Since its creation in 2000, the Merit Award Scholarship Program has helped more than 140,000 Michigan students afford a college education or vocational training. To receive the \$2,500 scholarship, students must post a satisfactory score on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test given during their junior year in high school. Scholarship recipients may use the award to cover tuition costs at any of Michigan’s public or private universities or community colleges.

Senate Republicans will hold the first Merit Award Scholarship Roundtable today on the Royal Oak Campus of Oakland Community College. The next roundtable will be held May 19 at Grand Rapids Community College.

Sikkema said he hoped students and parents would visit the Senate’s Merit Award Web site to find out more information about the scholarships and to let other lawmakers know of their support for the program. Students and parents may access the Web site at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/merit.